

A Few  
Sober **QUERIES**

Upon the late  
**Proclamation,**

For enforcing the Laws against CON-  
VENTICLES, &c. and the late  
VOTE of the House of Com-  
mons, for Renewing the said  
Act for three years more.

Proposed to the serious consideration  
of the Kings Majesty, with his  
two Houses of Parliament.

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By one that earnestly desires the Prosperity  
of **ENGLAND.**

*For by the Printer J. D. was Villaged.*

*Psal. 2. 10. Be wise now therefore O ye Kings, be instructed ye Judges  
of the Earth.*

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London, Printed in the Year, 1668.



*A Few Sober QUERIES upon the late PROCLAMATION, For enforcing the Laws against CONVENTICLES, &c.*

*Query I.*

**W**Hether it was agreeable to the Wisdom of a Parliament, to Petition the Kings Majesty, to issue forth a *Proclamation* to discourage and punish a great part of his Majesties faithful Subjects, in such a day as this is, when Trading is very low, Money scarce, the Nation very Poor, its Imperial City lying in the Dust, and most of the People of the Nation expecting *Liberty of Conscience* as a Sovereign Remedy for all these Diseases?

*Query II.* Whether it had not been more pleasing to God, and to the generality of this Nation, more for the honour of the King and Parliament, more agreeable to right Policy, and more for the Good and Prosperity of the whole Nation, for the Parliament to have Petitioned the King, to make good His Declaration from Breda, and to grant his faithful Subjects *Liberty to Worship God according to their Consciences*?

*Query III.* Whether it was agreeable to true Wisdom and Policy, to pass such a Vote, so suddenly, before the House was full, without any consideration, or considerable Debate, about the Consequences of it; and afterwards to repeat the same Vote (notwithstanding that it was opposed by Eminent Persons with Unanswerable Reasons) upon uncertain Reports of some tumultuous Meetings of the *Nonconformists*, without examining whether the Reports were true or no; and when those Reports were maliciously sent to the House, and would upon a thorow examination have appeared very false: for those People are, and have been very careful not to abuse the favour they received; and the Body of the Nation knows this is so?



*Query IV.* Whether if some persons had been tumultuous in their Meetings (as it was reported) it was fit, or agreeable to rules of Prudence, to punish the whole party for it, when the particular Offenders might have been punished; and whereas it might have been more rationally concluded, that those tumults were made by some persons that only pretended to be of that party, or that were instigated to it, by some, on purpose to hinder the hoped for Indulgence?

*Query V.* Whether the passing of such a Vote, and the making of such a Petition to the King, upon a few Letters from particular persons, and some flying Reports of the miscarriages of some *Nonconformists*, was not more unbecoming the Wisdom of a Parliament, than the proceedings of the Long Parliament against the Bishops, which was done upon Petitions from most Counties in *England*, and the general complaint of the Nation?

*Query VI.* Whether it was agreeable to the Wisdom and Policy of a Parliament, to pass a Vote to bring in a Bill for renewing of the Act against Conventicles, for three years longer, at a time when the House was engaged in another great Affair, and had appointed a day for Debating (according to the Kings desire in his Speech) what way was left for uniting the Kings *Protestant Subjects*? And whereas God never left following the Nation, with some severe Judgments since that Law was first made, until the execution of it was relaxed: hath not the Nation sufficiently felt the evil Consequences of this, with the other Laws against *Nonconformists*? for what Publick Judgments have we been under, ever since some of them were made? Shall we forget the *Plague*, *Fire*, and late *War*? What decay of Trade hath there been in the Nation? what Discontents in mens minds? what want of Money? and how have these Laws been made use of by cruel malicious men, to ruine their quiet and peaceable Neighbours! And have we not seen that when these Laws were left unexecuted, Trade revived, and mens minds were more satisfied? And is it agreeable to true Policy, when we have felt the sad effects of a Law, to revive it again, and that when we can expect no better Consequences of it then we had before?

*Query VII.* Whether the noise of the present proceedings against the *Nonconformists*, and the severity intended, doth not much sadden



den the hearts of most of the Kings faithful Subjects, and discourage them in their Callings and Tradings, so that their Discourse is of Transplanting themselves, calling in their Debts, putting off their Stocks, contracting their Trades; and whether this will not have a destructive influence upon the Trade of the whole Nation?

*Query VIII.* Whether the Persons against whom this present Severity is to be exercised, and the Laws executed, are not such as deserve their Liberty, and to be favoured in what they differ from the publick Profession, being in their Principles loyal, in their Lives sober and industrious, in number very great multitudes of all sorts, many of them of great Learning and Abilities, fit for Counsel and the managing of great Affairs; of great Reputation at home, and in forreign Nations; of great Relations and Interest in the Nation; of great Courage and Conduct, and able to do the Nation great service; men spread abroad in all parts of the Land, of all Callings and Trades, industriously contributing to the Publick good, and bearing a very great part of the Taxes, Burdens, and Trade of the Nation; Persons that are earnest with God for the Prosperity of *England*, and that mourned and prayed under all its Calamities; such as have, and are ready to give sufficient security for their peaceable living under the present Civil Government; such as are as good Subjects, and have as good an Interest in the Soyle as any *Englishmen* whatever; such as have been great sufferers in the late Judgements that befel the Nation, and assisted the Nation in all its Publick Concerns, with their Persons and Estates, and have been ready to bear all Publick Charges, Taxes, or Burdens; and have in all their Sufferings quietly submitted to the Penalties of the Law, and not in the least endeavoured to deliver themselves by any indirect means, notwithstanding they have not been (had they not been conscientious persons) without opportunities to do something that way. Are there not many of them that were great Instruments in restoring the King to his Crown, and multitudes that were never concerned in the late Civil War, and all of them, such as have carried themselves quietly and peaceably since his Majesties Restauration, notwithstanding the great discouragements and oppressions that they have lien under?

*Query IX.* Whether it stands with the Interest of the Nation, to persecute and destroy those that are true Protestants, and that

own the same Religion, and Faith (for the substance of it) with all other Protestants in the Nation, and are ready to maintain the truth of the Protestant Religion against all gain-sayers, and have written effectually to that purpose, and whose Interest it is to have that Religion preserved and protected; and who differ from the Publick Profession of the Nation, in that only which they in their Consciences think *sinful*, and those in Power think *Indifferent*?

*Query X.* Whether these People concerned in the present severity, are not for their Number, their Principles and Loyalty, their Parts and Wisdom, their Riches and Interest, their Conduct and Reputation, their Industry and manner of Living, as capable to make the Nation prosperous, and to serve the King, if they were favoured, as those that are encouraged by him?

*Query XI.* Whether for Magistrates with external force and penalties to pursue, punish or destroy their Subjects, of the same Religion with themselves, in the substance of it, because they differ from them in some Observances about it, be not contrary to Christianity and Prudence? The Scripture, that's the Rule of Christianity, hath not one tittle to countenance such a practice, but on the contrary, there are many commands, exhortations, and examples for Liberty, Moderation, and mutual Forbearance in such things: neither was there any such practice as this known for the first 300 years, neither did Christian Emperours practise it before Antichrist began to get to his Power: And it hath been lately evidently proved, (both by Scripture and Reason) *That no Prince nor State, ought by force to compel men, to any part of the Doctrine, Worship or Discipline of the Gospel.* Prudence directs us to a quite contrary practice, to do nothing to disturb and destroy men that are ready to contribute their utmost assistance for Publick good; to dissatisfie the minds of the generality of the Nation, to discourage them in their Callings; to drive them to transplant themselves, and to remove their Stocks to other Nations, and so consequently to impoverish the Land: And all this for not agreeing in Opinion with others, about such things wherein the peace and welfare of the Nation is not concerned?

*Query XII.* Whether it is not Gods Prerogative to Rule the Consciences of men, and that it is dangerous for any man, or company of men, to lord it over the Consciences of others, to impose  
any



any thing upon them in the Worship of God, or to force them to any thing against their Consciences? And whether men in imposing things upon others Consciences, do not make themselves Infalible, and set themselves in the place of God, and so bring down inevitable Judgements upon their own heads?

*Query XIII.* Whether it had not been more becoming the wisdom of the Magistrate, to use means to inform his Subjects in the matters in question, and so deal with them like rational Creatures, not to persecute them with force and corporal Punishments, and so deal with them like Beasts?

*Query XIV.* Whether it had not been more pleasing to God, more for the satisfaction and good of the Nation, more for the honour of King and Parliament, for the Parliament to have Petitioned the King to put all the Penal Laws in execution against common Drunkards, Swearers, Whoremongers, &c. and to have past a Vote, *That no common Swearer, Drunkard, Whoremaster, nor Ignorant or Scandalous person, should have any place of Preferment in the Church;* and then I believe there had been many Parishes, if not Bishopricks, freed from their present Incumbants.

*Query XV.* Whether there are so many able Preachers settled in the Nation, as that it is fit to exclude so many hundreds of able Preachers, dedicated to that work? and whether mens Souls do not starve in many parts of the Nation, for want of Spiritual food?

*Query XVI.* Whether the Effects of Persecution in all Nations, where it hath been practised, have not been sad? hath it not brought down Judgments upon those Nations, and proved for the certain impoverishing of them, and hath it not been so in *England*? And on the contrary, How prosperous have those Nations been that have granted *Liberty of Conscience*?

*Query XVII.* Whether it is not a great wrong to a State-Religion, to discover that it cannot be supported but by Persecution? and whether it is not one great Reason why Popery is so generally hated in *England*, because of the Butcheries they have made among innocent men, and that it is their Principle to persecute and destroy all that differ from them; for though Interest and malice may blind some, yet generally *Englishmen* hate such kind of proceedings and the Actors of them?

*Query XVIII.* Whether Moderation in a Prince is not that  
that

that endears him to *English* Subjects? and whether our Clergy do not exceedingly wrong the King and Parliament, by provoking them to persecute People that live quietly and peaceably, and to do that that is dissonant to the mindes of *Englishmen* in general?

*Query XIX.* Whether the Nations are not so filled with expectation of *Liberty*, that what ever is done, if this be not, they will be dissatisfied? and whether if all the Votes of the People of *England* were taken, there would not be a greater number by much for *Liberty*, than there would be against it?

*Query XX.* Whether the *Nonconformists* are not dealt with about their *Liberty*, as the *Christians* were by the *Heathens* of old, *Condemned before they are Heard*, or their *Arguments answered*? and whether the common way of proceeding against them, is not to call them, *Rogues, Traytors, Schismatics, Fanatics*; never considering that they are *Englishmen*, that have as good Interest in the soil as themselves, and as capable and ready to do the Nation service; nor never answering the Arguments they bring for their Opinions, nor for their *Liberty*?

*Query XXI.* Whether if the Magistrate must force men in things pertaining to the Worship of God, and unite them in their practice, it were not more agreeable to force those that think the things they practise *Indifferent*, to leave of the practising of them, than to force those that think them *Sinful* to practise them.

*Query XXII.* Whether the denying of People *Liberty of Conscience*, and the persecuting of them for different Opinions in matters of Religion, and for not practising contrary to their Consciences, do not justify the *Pope*, and *Papish Princes*, in their Anti-christian practice, and encourage them in their severity against their *Protestant* Subjects?

*Query XXIII.* Is it not inconsistent with Reason, to practise a ruining severity towards the Members of the same Society, for things which neither themselves, nor any others are detrimented by; and when the dissent proposed to be persecuted, is unavoidable unto them in whom it is; whereas all Government hath a respect in punishment, to the Wills of the Offenders, and the Safety of others?

*Query XXIV.* Whether the Kings *Proclamation*, and the House of



of Commons *Votes* for *Persecution*, do not exceedingly gratify their Enemies abroad, and at home? There's no greater Friend to our neighbouring Nations than *Persecution* and *Uniformity* in *England*. For thereby the Trade of the Nation comes amongst them; the most industrious Tradesmen are driven to them, and much of the Riches and Treasure of the Nation, and abundance of the most diligent hands in *England*; and so consequently the Nation weakened and impoverished. As to your Enemies at home, they know there is nothing makes more for the settlement of the Government, the honour of the Magistrates, and security of the Publick, than to grant *Liberty of Conscience*, and therefore this severity pleaseth them.

*Query XXV.* Whether the things for which these men are persecuted and ruined, are not so plausible, that all unprejudiced persons will pity them and joyn with them, seeing that they suffer for worshipping God according to his mind and their Consciences, as they have often declared and proved, and because they will not worship him in a way contrary to his mind and their Consciences, and if they did not do the one, and leave the other undone, they should sin against their Consciences?

*Query XXVI.* Whether the *Liberty* desired, is not so rational a thing, that no unprejudiced persons, that mind the good of the Nation, can pretend a reason why it should be denied, seeing it is desired only for *Protestants*, such as own the same Religion, for the substance of it, with all other *Protestants* in the Nation; and seeing that all that are to have an Interest in it shall give sufficient security to the Civil Magistrate for their peaceable living under the Civil Government; and that they provide their places for Meeting without any publick charge; and that their Meetings are to be open, and under the inspection of the Magistrate, and that any may hear what they preach: Their Preachers expect no publick preferments, and they will be alwayes ready to give an account for what they speak or do: What reason can there be to deny this *Liberty*?

*Qu. XXVII.* Whether the Effects of this *Liberty* are likely to be so dangerous that therefore it should be denied? Some say, That many would not go to their Parish Churches; What hurt can this be when they pay their Tythe to the Priest of the Parish, and go where they of the *Protestant* Principles go? Others say, It would

*spread the Non-conformists Opinion.* What hurt can there be in that, while it is their opinions, and accordingly they teach men to be loyal subjects to the King of Heaven and Earth, and obedient to all lawful Magistrates on Earth, to live to the glory of God, the benefit of the Publick, and their own good? Others fear *that the Nation would see, that there was no necessity for the conformable Ministers to have such great Revenues.* This is no necessary consequence of *Liberty*, neither would it in the least prejudice the Publick good if their Revenues were lessened, that the Kings Majesty might be able therewith to manage the Publick Affairs of the Nation, without laying such heavy Taxes upon his Subjects; and the Clergy might have more time to follow their Studies. But would not *Liberty of Conscience*, granted to the Kings Protestant Subjects, satisfie the minds of the generality of the Nation, unite them in their endeavours for Publick good, encourage them in their Trades, fill the Nation with the Knowledge of God. And is not this the way to have God to bless us?

*Qu. XXVIII.* Whether the persons gratified by the severity against *Nonconformists* are so considerable, that the King and Parliament should wave the Publick good for their sake? For, excepting the Clergy, who are there for it but persons that have particular Interests, or are carrying on some particular Designs, which they fear will be prevented by *Liberty*; or some persons that will not wave their Particular humours for the Publick good. Are the Clergy so considerable, that, to gratifie their humours, multitudes of *Englishmen* must be persecuted and ruined, who are faithful Subjects, men industrious in their Callings, contributing greatly in their particular places to the Publick good. Whereas the Clergy that are gratified by the threatned severity, are persons for the generality of them, perfectly lost in their Reputation amongst all sorts of men, even many that are really for Episcopacy; persons much exempted by their Calling and condition from serving the publick Interest of the Nation; persons that, though they are the Instigators to this severity, yet cannot answer the Arguments proposed for *Liberty of Conscience*, nor those that the *Nonconformists* propose for their *Nonconformity*; and yet are thus disingenuous to desire to have them persecuted and ruined; persons that for the most part enjoyed places before the Kings Restoration, and were



as conformable to those times as to these; only many were kept off, as being scandalous in their Lives, or ignorant, and a very few went away, as sticking to his Majesties Interest, thinking *that* the best and surest way to become Bishops; persons that do in no wise advantage the Crown, but get great Revenues from it; persons that never cared to what danger they brought the State, to preserve their own Interest, but would rather ruine the Civil Magistrate and Interest, than lose any of their vast Power, Dignities and Preferments; persons, that though they pretend great readiness to submit to and carry on his Majesties Interest, and the Interest of the whole Nation, yet, whenever they conceive his Majesties Mind, with the Nations Interest, do thwart their particular Interest, who are more ready to oppose his Majesty than they, as is evident by their carriages of late? Are they not also persons more Heretodox to the Church of *England*, for the most part of them, than the *Nonconformists*? for, are they not *Arminians*, *Pelagians*, *Socinians*, and *Erastians*? although they have large Consciences to those Articles, some of which are quite contrary to their Principles. Whereas the *Nonconformists* differ in nothing from the 39 Articles of the Church of *England*, but in Ceremonies and Discipline. Besides, the most ingenious and learned among the Clergy themselves, are really for *Liberty of Conscience*. Consider the Premises, and then I hope you will in your Wisdom conclude, the persons gratified by this severity, not so considerable, as to ruine the Nation to humour them?

*Qu. XXIX.* Whether the Interest of the Clergy is so considerable as to save the Nation, if all that differ from them were destroyed? I suppose none will imagine. For I verily believe had the King and Parliament thought of an Act to degrade the Bishops, and to add their Land to the Crown, and send able Preachers amongst the People, I suppose there had been Petitions sent to the Magistrates, to beg the furthering of it, from most Counties and Cities in *England*, they are so generally lost in their Reputations amongst the generality of men.

*Qu. XXX.* Whether if the Supream Magistrates make sinful Laws, the Inferiour are free from guilt in putting them in execution? Or, whether the Inferiour in executing, are not as guilty as the Superiour in making them?

*Qu. XXXV.* Whether the King and Parliament, would not do well to consider, how the Apostle *Paul* cried out (after he was converted) against himself, for Persecuting the Saints, and continually afterwards, preached the Doctrine of Moderation and Liberty?

*Qu. XXXVI.* Whether the *Jews* and *Heathens* are not more excusable in Persecuting the Christians, than our Magistrates in Persecuting the *Nonconformists*; seeing that *Englishmen* have had more of the Light of the Gospel than ever they had?

*Qu. XXXVII.* Whether it is not considerable that our Neighbours, the *Dutchmen*, did not commonly call the Act against *Conventicles*, when it first came out, *A Law against the Christian Religion*, and were thereby the more encouraged to fight with us, as knowing God would not prosper the undertakings of those who had made a Law so dishonourable to Himself, so destructive to the Gospel, and so pernicious to most of the Sober People in the Nation?

*Qu. XXXVIII.* Whether the King and Parliament can imagine, that the People concerned in this Severity, will not rather lye in Prison, be Banished, or Dye, than leave their Principles and Practices? and if any should be frightened to a present compliance, whether they would not come off with greater trouble, and prove greater enemies to the Persons enforcing the things aforesaid?

*Qu. XXXIX.* Whether these proceedings in persecuting the *Nonconformists*, is not a ready way to spread their Opinions? Will not their Voice out of Prisons make as many Profelytes, as out of Pulpits; *Englishmen* being by Nature very Pittiful; and what comes from men in Affliction, seizeth upon them with more advantage?

*Qu. XL.* Whether if you were able to stop the mouths of all the present *Nonconformists*, or put them out of the way; as long as you leave men the enjoyment of the Bible in their Mother-Tongue, or the liberty of their own Understandings, would there not New-*Nonconformists* daily arise, so long as the Discipline and Government of the Church continues as now it is?

*Qu. XLI.* Whether if all the *Nonconformists* in the Nation, were actually destroyed by the present Severity, it would not consequently ruine the whole Nation?

*Qu. XLII.* Whether the Nation be in a condition to spare so great a part of her People as are concerned in the Proclamation?  
and



and whether Publick Taxes can be paid, Offices born, Publick Burdens undergone, when such a great part of the People are ruined and made useleſs?

*Qu.* XXXIX. Whether the Severity to be exerciſed will not ruine thouſands that are *Conformable*? For do not ſome *Nonconformiſts* keep hundreds of People at work that are *Conformable*, and muſt be ruined with their Families, if they loſe their Employments; which they are ſure to do, if the Severity be exerciſed toward thoſe that imploy them?

*Qu.* XL. Whether the preſent ſeverity will not only diſſatisfie the *Nonconformiſts*, but alſo great numbers of others in the Nation, their Friends and Relations, Neighbours and Dealers; who have found them juſt and honeſt in their places and Callings; who can in no wiſe be ſatisfied to ſee them hal'd to Priſon for no other Crime but worſhipping God according to their Conſciences?

*Qu.* XLI. Whether it is agreeable to Prudence for a Magiſtrate, that hath Subjects of differing judgements, to reſolve to have them of one mind; or elſe to joyn with one party, and to be the declared Enemy and Perſecutor of all the reſt, and ſo put them all under Diſcontent, and then unite them together in ſuch diſcontent? whereas were they favoured, they might be prudently managed to ballance each other; and ſo become more ſafe und uſeful to a State, than any united party whatever.

*Qu.* XLII. Whether the Nation, in reſpect of its concerns with Foreign States, be able to ſpare ſuch a great part of its People, as are like to be ruined by this Severity? or whether we ſhall not ſo weaken our ſelves, as not be able to keep our League with *Holland*, nor ballance the Affaires of our more potent Neighbour?

*Qu.* XLIII. Whether the *King* and *Parliament* by the preſent Severity, do not gratifie their Enemies both abroad and at home? and whether there can be a greater Enemy to you, or Friend to our Neighbouring Nations, than *Perſecution* and *Uniformity* in *England*; for thereby the moſt induſtrious Traders are driven to them, and much of the Treſure of the nation, and abundance of the moſt diligent hands in *England* (as former *Perſecutions* did abundantly manifeſt;) and ſo conſequently the Nation weakened and impoverished? And as to our Enemies at home, they know there's nothing conducing more for the Settlement of the Government,  
the

the Honour of the Magistrate, and Security of the Publick, than *Liberty of Conscience*; therefore this Severity pleaseth them.

*Qu.* XLIV. Whether the Rebuilding the Imperial City of the Nation, be not of great consequence for the good of the whole Nation; and whether that is probable to be done, when multitudes of persons, highly concerned in the Rebuilding of it, are taken off from their endeavours, and from laying out their money, by the present *Proclamation*; many that began to build several Houses, are resolved to give over, seeing they are not like to enjoy them in quietness.

*Qu.* XLV. Whether this Severity will not consequently destroy the whole Trade of the Nation? For it will not only take off the persons concerned from Trading, but there are many with whom they deal both abroad and at home; some their Creditors, others their Debtors; some imployed by them, others who imploy them: and there will be a great breach made into the Trade of all these.

*Qu.* XLVI. Whether the Saints ought not to continue the Assemblies of their *Worship of God*, without, or against the Consent of the *Magistrates*; they being commanded so to do, *Mat.* 28. 18, 19, 20. *Heb.* 10. 25. *By an Angel from God*, *Act.* 5. 20. It was the Apostles practice (who were not rebellious nor seditious) *Act.* 4. 18, 19, 20, 23. & 5. 22, 28. And whether the People of God in all Ages did not so?

*Qu.* XLVII. Whether it would not be a noble work, becoming the Wisdom of an *English Parliament*, when the House are to consider the Latter part of the Kings Speech, *To resolve no more to Persecute their Fellow-Subjects, for Circumstances in Worship, but rather to use their endeavour with his Majesty, for an Act of Indulgence, and free Liberty, for all men to Worship God according to their Consciences*; so that mens minds may be satisfied, and each contribute in their several places and stations for the publick good?

*Qu.* XLVIII. Whether a serious Consideration and thorow Debate of these *Queries*, may not procure the Author a *Pardon* for Publishing them, and (with the rest of his Majesties loyal Subjects) his *Liberty* to worship God according to his *Conscience*?

F I N I S.



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